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Protesting at funerals would require a permit

LANSING – Sen. Jud Gilbert has introduced a bill that would require protestors to apply for a permit if they want to protest outside a funeral home, cemetery or other location where a funeral or memorial service is taking place.

“While I am an advocate for free speech, I’m not sure protesting at funerals is an appropriate action. However, I feel we should give local communities the right to decide whether to allow protests to occur,” said Gilbert, R-Algonac. “I think demonstrators should take their signs to city hall, the capitol or a rally instead of a private funeral, but I would like to let local citizens decide what is best for their community.”

Gilbert’s legislation would require protestors to apply for and be issued a permit from the local unit of government. A permit would not have to be issued if the service is held on private property and one may be issued if the service is on public property.

Additionally, the local government may charge a fee for the application and issuance of a permit.

“This bill does not ban protests and takes into account a person’s right to free speech, but it also takes into account the rights of a grieving family,” Gilbert said. “As a funeral director, I understand the devastating effects a protest can have on those who are already distraught. No family should endure harassment while they are trying to say goodbye to a loved one.”

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